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THE MAN JESUS

BY MARY AUSTIN

CHAPTER I

WHEN Tiberius Cæsar had been some fifteen years upon the seat of Roman Empire, there arose in an inconsiderable quarter of his realm a man of a destiny so tragic and a character so commanding that a score of centuries have scarcely served to dim the appeal of his unique personality. He arose upon the Bridge of the World, shaken as it was with the passing of Roman power between Egypt and Asia, from a people whose voice among the nations was as the voice of one crying small wares in the midst of traffic. They were the Keepers of the Bridge. Their race had been born amid its ribs and buttresses, they had been swept from it by Egypt and Assyria, whence, after generations of captivity, they had found their way back to it with the instinct of homing pigeons. They sat upon the Bridge between the desert and the sea and trafficked with the nations going past; they trafficked even for the right to sit and traffic in their ancient seats. Sometimes they fought for it, but that was only when they were threatened in their sole other distinction. For they were not only a race of traffickers: they dreamed greatly.

When the bazaars were shut and the smoke of the evening sacrifice gone up, they foregathered upon the housetops with their feet tucked under them and dreamed a splendid and orderly heaven with Him of the Ineffable Name sitting in the midst of the vault, surrounded by rank on rank of Seraphim and Cherubim, angels and archangels, all singing and with flaming wings. They went further, and dreamed a world of men in the same order and symmetry, a world dripping with milk and honey, where there should be none hurt and none crying any more, and the lion and the lamb lying down together. It was, perhaps, a shopkeeper's heaven, with everything ticketed and tucked away in it—think of a people undertaking to name the whole heavenly host!—but it surpassed in grandeur, in singleness of conception, the hybrid theogonies of the pagan world as much as the Greco-Roman Zeus-Pater, the Thunderer, was surpassed by their High and Holy One Who Inhabiteth Eternity.

And for the right to worship this One-God in their own fashion,

and to keep undefiled His holy places, the Jews would fight on occasion, but it was the only thing they would fight for. Their two great national achievements—the winning forth from Egypt and the return from the captivity—they owed not to the sword, but to that quality which has made them before all others a business people. Once religious freedom was assured to them, they made what terms they could for a degree of political independence.

There are two things to remember about the Jews in thinking of the man who arose among them: that their dreaming was all of God, and that when there was anything of great import to be done, they thought of every other way to go about it rather than by fighting. It is well to keep these in mind because, however much a man of any race may seem to oppose the genius of the tribe that produced him, it is impossible that he should not take from them in some fashion the line of his direction. The third item in the resolution of the external forces that determined the mold of the man Jesus was the fact that he was sprung from a mountain people.

That was a country split into shoulders and summits, into narrow knife-cut valleys and flowering oases between high, tumbled barrens. It followed that the inhabitants were divided into tribes and half-tribes, and these into factions. It is always so in mountain countries where field is separated from field by waste, and village is buttressed against village. Carmel has its foot in the sea, Lebanon is cut off, Hermon the white-haired stands up over Naphtali, Gilead and Ephraim are divided. The Samaritans were despised by the Judeans, who found the Galileans crude; and the Galileans themselves doubted if any good thing could come out of Nazareth. When they needed, therefore, a common bond they did not find it as other tribes are prone to do, in political advantage or identity of material interests; they found it in the common dream, in the reality of a common spiritual experience. They fought for Jehovah and the holy places even though they could not agree among themselves which places were holiest. That was how it happened that the people who never achieved anything like national integrity for themselves, except for the briefest periods, were the first to effect a movement toward the universal state. For when their great man came, he walked—though they failed for the time to appreciate it—in the deep-rutted track which Hebrew thought had made for him.

The first that was heard of him was in connection with one of those singular characters which seem to have arisen from time to time among all ancient peoples—a true prophet, by all the marks, of the stripe of Malachi and Habakkuk and Jeremiah.

This John—called The Baptist—must have been a Galilean, an inhabitant of that portion of the Bridge which reached from the roots of Lebanon past Naphtali, past Tabor and Hermon, past the plain of Esdraelon, stretching to the narrow Phœnician coast, down the Rift of Jordan to the dead, desert sea. For this assumption we have the

natural temper of his mind and the fact that he was amenable to the civil authority of Herod, Tetrarch of Galilee. He took a true prophet's liberty with his sovereign by telling him exactly what he thought of him, and Herod for his part accorded John the customary recognition of kings to prophets by shutting him up in prison and finally making an end of him. But before that much had happened.

About the time that the shadow of madness began to grow upon the mind of Tiberius Claudius, Nero and the hateful race of informers fattened under the hand of Sejanus, when Herod Antipas was living openly with his brother's wife, and Aretas, father of his legal consort breathing war against him, this John began suddenly to preach the Kingdom of Heaven at hand. To the orthodox Jew, the phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" meant the specific realization of the great national dream, an institution so Hebraic in its scope and limitation that it was doubtful if the world at large had any place in it beyond a vague consignment to an outer circle of darkness where there was wailing and gnashing of teeth. Therefore, when John began to proclaim its immanence, and declare it in that high impassioned style which is the hall-mark of prophetic inspiration, the little world of Jewry went out to hear him.

In the first place, it might be true; and in the second, John was, on the whole, very good entertainment. He was an ascetic dressed in a garment of camel's-hair girt about with skins, living off the land, on seeds of sparse-grown desert shrubs, and honey from the hiving-rocks along the bluffs of Jordan. Then there was this interesting new ritual of the sprinkling of water—it was a poor Jew indeed who could not make room in his life for one more ceremonial; and he had a lively condemnation for such as are in authority, which is always pleasing to those not themselves among the authorities. Also there were devout souls who were in expectation, looking for the great day of Israel. Among them was the Man from Nazareth.

He must have come on foot from his home, a day's journey, down the deepest rift in the world—it is not for mere poetizing that the river is called Jordan, the Down-comer—to the ford where Naaman washed, where the Ark of the Covenant passed over and the reeds are still shaken in the wind out of Hauran. The soil hereabout is as red as a red heifer, streaked with marl. The river comes down between ribbons of deep poisonous green in a jungle of tamarisk and oleander. Westward Judea rises by terraces, dim under the heat haze, scarred by volcanic waste; eastward lie the level tops of Gilead, out of which the prophet Elias had so mysteriously burst upon the times of Ahab. Many thoughts of Israel past and future must have flocked with the crowds that went out to John's preaching in the shut valley of the Jordan. Crowds there must have been far beyond what is indicated by the meager report, for the prophet succeeded not only in attracting the attention of the reigning house, but in staving off his end for a year or two by reason of his popularity. But for his survival in history

and in the world beyond the Bridge he was debtor to the Man from Nazareth.

Of this man, up to the moment of his contact with John and the reorganization of his spiritual forces which took place immediately afterward, very little is known. His very name of Joshua has come down to us only in the Greek form, Jesus. Beyond that we have the mere mention of his parents, Joseph and Mary, his brothers James and Juda, Simon and Joses, and unnamed sisters. There is a tradition that he was born in Bethlehem while his mother was on a journey, all of which is set down with great circumstantiality by one Luke, a physician writing in the last quarter of the first century; but if this is true, Jesus never referred to the place and never revisited it. He was brought up in the hill town of Nazareth to his father's trade of carpenter. This much seems certain. For the rest, we have a great body of legends such as collect readily about any man of singular gift or destiny. These in their place should be examined; for the light they throw on the way in which, within a generation after his death, he came to be regarded, they have much to commend them. But of plain fact there is this precisely: a young Jew, something under thirty, of the better class of working-men, by name Joshua Ben Joseph, receiving the rite of baptism from a wild anchorite on the mud-banks of a muddy river.

There had been preaching first—perhaps psalm-singing. It would have been in the nature of a pilgrimage, this exodus from Jerusalem, from Samaria, from the parts of Galilee and the east-lying Greco-Syrian Decapolis to hear the prophet. It was a time when men looked every way for salvation. John they heard with an instinctive attempt to connect him with their past, with those of his own trade of prophecy. It was so they could best judge what his teaching might mean to the future of Israel. In their dreams the Jews looked for a Messiah, but in their hearts they expected Elijah, greatest of all True-Speaking. Among the faithful to this day is not the door left open on the paschal evening for the return of the prophet? It was hereabout that he was last seen of men, parting the Jordan with his garment, passing over dry-shod before he was taken up. . . . (*O the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!*) Memories like this prompted inquiry.

"Who art thou?" No doubt, as they waited, a supernatural thrill went over them. It was a time and a place when almost anything might happen. But John had an answer for them:

"The voice of one crying in the Wilderness. Prepare ye the way of the Lord!" So now, they knew him. He was the forerunner. This also was according to Scripture. But there was more of John's message, and that astonishing.

Of old time the prophets had preached to kings and high priests, to the nation in its entirety, rebuking tyrannies and putting down false gods, restoring alike the altars and the ancient liberties. The new note that came in with John was the note of personal repentance; and

not that only, but fruit mete for repentance brought forth on every bough, for "the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Judge how this was received by the Hebrew who counted himself safe in being of the stock of Abraham. "And think not," John warned them, "to say within yourselves we have Abraham to our father, for . . . God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

This was the astonishment and the affront of John's preaching. The Kingdom was at hand, and being a Jew was not of itself sufficient to get you into it. It seems certain that many of his hearers, among them Herod, rejected such doctrine. But Herod was reproved openly by John for his adulteries; and to the Pharisees and Sadducees when he saw them come to his baptism he scoffed, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned *you* to flee from the wrath to come?"

You perceive here the ancient prophetic touch both in the temper of his mind and in the imagery. It would have been the end of the dry season, and all along the heights of Gilead quick fires ran in the stubble. In his mind's eye John saw the tribes of formalists and hypocrites like swarms of vipers and scorpions scuttling before the fires unquenchable. But for the common people who came asking sincerely what they should do, John had another answer: "He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none, and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." To the publicans he advised, "Exact no more than that which is appointed to you"; and to the soldiers, "Do violence to no man, neither exact anything wrongly, and be content with your wages."

An all too brief report, but explicit. In that last clause is swept away every possibility of supposing that John came to head a revolt against the power of Rome or to reconstruct the social order. This is important in connection with what happened afterward, for the teaching of the Baptist is the sole personal influence that can be traced in the work of the Man from Nazareth. Words, phrases, of the Forerunner cropped up again in his ministry; its opening slogan was the same call to repentance. On the death of its founder the first definite movement of the Christian organization was in the direction of John's programme—they had all things in common; he that had two coats imparted to him that had none, and he that had meat did likewise. Whether the disciples owed it most to Jesus or to John, it marks for the two men a common source of inspiration, a common expectation.

The message of the Baptist was the thread by which Jesus felt his way to the heart of his own mission. The Kingdom was at hand; it was to be prepared for, but the preparation had not all to do with God and man: it was bound up somehow with the relations between man and his neighbor.

All this could hardly have come of one preaching.

Years afterward Paul found Apollos, an Alexandrine convert, spreading the baptism of John as far afield as Ephesus. All of which

goes to show the pertinence of his doctrine and the man's grip on his audience. Of this there were both numbers and variety. The river here meets the highway; legionaries went by between Petra and Damascus; caravans from Egypt to all parts of Arabia. At the ford the thick ribbon of tamarisk and oleander, called the Pride of Jordan, is set back by the canebrake. Old herons go a-fishing there; the hot air of the Rift is filled with the pestiferous hum of flies. By day there would be the noise of the caravans and the purr of the sleek water; by night the friendly pilgrim camps, the brush fires of the wood-cutters, at times the roar of a lion in the jungle and the snorting of the tethered asses. Over all the voice of the prophet prevailing:

"Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. . . . But one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: . . . whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor and gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with a fire unquenchable.

"I indeed baptize you with water; . . . he shall baptize you with the holy ghost and with fire."

Among those who, hearing, went down to receive the rite of cleansing was the young man from Nazareth. As he went he felt the heavens open and the Spirit of God descend upon him; and as it were a voice saying, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased."

All the God-tales come straight out of the heart of man; all the devil-tales also.

There is a part of us which lies remote from the region of material sense, open to all manner of undetermined influences. We are torn by these things, exalted, cast down, informed and illumined to a degree surpassing what comes to us through the conscious intelligence. But when we speak of them it can only be in terms shaped for us by the latest guess at the nature of the disturbance—God, demon, or the spirits of ancestors. The young man from Nazareth, as he passed under the Baptist's hand through the water of baptism, knew what sounded in his soul for the voice of God the Father. He was led by it up out of the Rift of Jordan into the Wilderness. But of all that happened to him there we know no more than can be conveyed in a tale he made of it, a kind of allegory of the soul's immaterial conflict in terms of devil and angels.

It was so in those days men spoke to one another of experiences that passed below the threshold of exterior sense. Doubtless it was so understood when he told it: as a thing experienced rather than seen. Not for hundreds of years did the story of the temptation put on the gross materiality under which the Middle Ages knew it.

That it was his most significant experience we gather from the fact that it was the only thing that ever happened to Jesus which he thought worth speaking about. That he spoke of this with such particularity as to impress it on all his disciples is our warrant for believing that

nothing else out of the ordinary had ever happened to him. What he saw, what he lived through, what he heard talked about as a carpenter at Nazareth, was so undistinguished a part of the community experience that we are free to restore it from the copious researches of scholarship. Behind this thin veil of parable we have his own account of the essential elements of his genius.

Here, then, is the story of the carpenter in the Wilderness as he told it. After he had heard sounding through all his soul the acknowledgment of his Sonship, himself part and parcel of the divine being, he went up and out of the Ghor into the Wilderness of Judea between the brook Cherith and the vineyards of En-gedi, a terrible blank land, treeless, spined with low shrubs from under which the adder starts. He was around and about in it forty days, fasting. He saw vultures sailing and the blue wall of Moab through the mist of evaporation from the dead salt sea—"smoke going up for ever"—all opalescent in the unclouded light, but saw no man. He laid himself open to the sense the desert has of being possessed, of being held and occupied by personality and power. Forty days and nights the spirit led and eluded him, and at last he grappled with it. Then said the tempter, Jesus being faint with hunger, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." And again, seeing he got nothing by that method, the devil set him on a high place, as it were the pinnacle of the temple, and bade him cast himself down, since if he were the true son of God the angels should have charge over him, lest he so much as dash his foot against a stone. Finally, from a high mountain the devil showed him the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, saying: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Answering out of the deep wells of Scripture, the Man from Nazareth answered his own soul.

He had gone into the desert a carpenter, with the word of John in his ears and the call of God in his consciousness; he came out of it prophet and teacher. To know the full force in his life of the answer he found to the questing spirit, we must know what went in with him other than John's doctrine. I do not mean what schooling, what human experiences, what things observed and noted among men; for of these he had no more than was common to scores of other young men who went down to John's baptism. It was none of these things which enabled him to clear himself at the stroke of revelation of the old Hebrew notion of man apart from God, as the sheep are apart from the shepherd, of another nature and kind from him. For Israel thought of God as a sheep thinks of a shepherd—One who led by green pastures, fed, fended, or destroyed as He thought good for them. But Jesus, from the first we hear of him, comes filled with the sense of divine kinship, possessed of it as a son is possessed of the attributes of a father—an idea so germane to us now that we can scarcely realize with what effect of the heavens being opened it burst upon him.

It was not, then, any question of the relationship between himself and God that drove him to the Wilderness. There is something still to seek for the clear understanding of the parable of the Temptations: something there was between Jesus and John, something between Jesus and his disciples, which was either so well understood as to require no explanation, or so profoundly felt that it lay beyond the reach of expression. I find it in the one feature of the Hebrew religion which distinguishes it from all its contemporaries: in the conviction of the reality of righteousness.

The cult of Jehovah had outlived on its own ground the gods of Nineveh and Tyre, of Egypt and Babylon. It maintained itself in the face of dying Greco-Romanism by that one article of its faith which was never lost sight of even in its worst apostasy: namely, that ethical rightness is no mere matter of opinion, but a living principle. The pagan had no use whatever of his gods except in what they could do for him. In some fashion he recognized an essential element in things—dung-heaps, orchards, fevers—which, if he could but put himself in harmony with it, could be “worked.” When it could be no longer worked in his favor he got him a new god amenable to another sort of persuasion. But Jehovah was the God of Israel conquering or Israel conquered. This point toward which we struggled so slowly with all our science, our knowledge of heredity and the constitution of human society, was the common possession of Jesus and his people: the revelation of righteousness as a thing to be eternally sought after, whether one lost or won by it.

This, then, was what lay behind and renders intelligible the fragments of Scripture with which Jesus met the importunities of his personal life, coming to him in the form of the arch-tempter on the mount of the Wilderness.

In the first and second of these we have a direct answer to two of the most vexed and mistaken problems of his name-people. To the suggestion that he should appease the desires of his man nature by causing stones to be made bread, Jesus had answered that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. It is impossible to think of this as presenting itself to the Man from Nazareth as a personal problem only—the problem of youth with its hungry desires for food, a mate, houses, trappings. This is not the story of a plain man finding himself, but of a soul unselfed from the beginning, apprised of his gifts, sure of his high calling, seeking back of the material lack of his time the essential disharmony which his message was to resolve. But whether settled for himself or for humanity, the question was never reopened. Socially minded as he showed himself to be, he must have faced here and struck out of his own course the futility of attempting to achieve the Kingdom by the relief of immediate social discomfort. Hungry as his time was, sore with poverty and injustice and oppression, when he went back to it it was not with any palliative, but with the keen

sword of the spirit. The misery of his world rose up against him, assailed him through his great gift of compassion, threatened to engulf him; but always we see him striking clear of it, committing himself to the Word with such confidence as a bird commits itself to the air or a great fish to the deep.

But if Jesus rejected the principle of direct relief as a means of bringing the Kingdom to pass, he was even more explicit in his condemnation of direct political action as establishing it. For the devil in Jesus's time was no mere hoof-and-tail bogie, but that Lucifer whose seat was once in heaven. And what else can the worship of him mean in connection with the kingdom of this world and the power and glory of them than the use of satanic means—political intrigue, jealousy, faction, conspiracy—by means of which the rebellious angels fell? We shall come closer than this to the mind of Jesus touching the social organization, but we shall get nothing more decisive than his "Get thee behind me!"

For the second item of the adventure of a soul in the Wilderness there can be no interpretation possible except we begin with what sooner or later must be allowed to Jesus—that he was a mystic. In saying this no more is implied than is true in some degree of every one of us. It is to say that the larger half of him lay consciously in that region of which we have already had occasion to speak, the unmapped region of the subconsciousness. Your true mystic is one who lives at home in that country to which most of us repair infrequently on a visit, or are snatched by compelling incidents of passion or suffering. The notion that mysticism savors somehow of impracticality leads us to deny its existence in ourselves, which amounts to a denial that there is anything in us which is immaterial or uncomprehended. To such as these it is a surprise to know that the states of mysticism preserve an orderly sequence and are accompanied by definite gains and powers. Such powers the Man from Nazareth achieved. To have endured this particular temptation he must already have been aware of them when he went up out of Jordan.

Almost the first we hear of Jesus on his return to Galilee was as a healer of men's bodies and a reader of their minds. Such powers cannot be thought of as coming leaping to the demand; they are attained by growth and development. If, then, we concede that when Jesus went into the Wilderness he knew himself possessed of such capabilities, we have, in the incident of the pinnacle from which he was to cast himself down, a symbol of the peculiar temptation of the gifted. To make himself safe, to make himself wondered at, set apart: this is the devil's bait for the saint and the adept. Whether or not this was what Jesus implied in his personal narrative, it is borne out by his whole attitude toward his special capacities. All through his career he displayed, in the use of his extraordinary gifts, a reticence and sense of proportion unequalled among men of genius.

This was the fruit of the Wilderness: the subordination of bodily

and material needs to the spiritual, based on the perception of the spiritual as the only reality: the consecration of gifts to service rather than to personal aggrandizement; the rejection of political action as a means of attaining the desired social equilibrium. If this were not the implicit meaning of the parable, it was at least a thing achieved within the scope of his personality. Throughout the remainder of his life he is plainly seen so to direct his own operations. For in this he excelled all the saints: in his spiritual efficiency. What he had determined on the mountain he went forth to preach in Galilee.

CHAPTER II

OF this Herod against whom John inveighed we shall see enough to warrant some description. A Jew by religion, Greek in culture, though with a touch of Semitic magnificence, Roman by affiliation; handsome, undisciplined, perfumed, wily, he no doubt deserved the epithet of Fox which the Man of Nazareth afterward applied to him. Fearing Rome a little and his constituents as much as rulers of the Jews have always feared them, he nevertheless claims a greater share of our attention than either of the other sons of Herod the Great among whom his kingdom was divided.

Archelaus, Ethnarch of Idumea, Judea and Samaria, came into direct conflict with the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, was worsted by them, deposed and superseded by a procurator under the hand of the Emperor. Philip on the north, touching the borders of Galilee, loved peace and got it, and got nothing else; but if Herod, called Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee, were judged less objectionable than his father, it was because his restricted field gave him fewer opportunities for getting himself disliked. Of those that he had it cannot be said that he neglected any of them.

On the present occasion he was discovering himself in the irritating position of a man who has flouted society and the gods on the grounds of a justifying passion, and finds that neither the gods nor society has accepted his justification. During a recent visit to Rome he had become enamoured of his brother's wife, whom he had brought away with him; whereupon Aretas, King of Arabia, father of his legal consort, assaulted his southern border. It was while his affairs were at this pass that John arose, shaking out the banner of prophetic denunciation.

Evidently those who accepted his moral conclusions judged John competent to deal with the situation. The Man from Nazareth, though made one of his adherents by the rite of baptism, passed to his own country without any attempt to support the Baptist's attack upon existing conditions. If from the mount of temptation he had seen the thin line of the legionaries fumbling the dry passes of the Arabian border, or, at the ford of Jordan, detachments going down from

the garrison at Capernaum to eke out the Tetrarch's slender resources, it waked in him no impulse of resistance to the established order. Wrapt still in his personal revelation, he came up out of the Rift into Galilee.

From the hills of Nazareth one sees the ships of the Empire low like a flock of gulls on the rim of the Mediterranean; below the oleanders are pink against the whitewashed walls under the olive-trees, and blunt, dark oaks overhang the strips of tillage. A little town, a butt, a Jack Dullard of a town among the smart new cities of Tiberias and Capernaum, with their Greek theaters and Roman garrisons; a little, old, shave-head, bewigged Hebrew housewife of a town, to judge by the proverb, which suckled a prophet and did not know him. But at Capernaum converged all the roads that went over the Bridge: new Roman roads, Phœnician coast roads, the oldest roads in the world between Egypt and Asia, and the traffic of the world went by on them. Herod rebuilt Tiberias and had a palace there; he fortified Sepphoris; village touched village. Here as to a theater more befitting his mission than hill-bent Nazareth, Jesus moved, new-born from the Wilderness. It is believed he had a house there, but of a shop and the appurtenances of his trade there is no mention.

On omissions slight as this a world sick with the sloth of the Middle Ages made of him a kind of respectable mendicant. One finds him, however, going about with other householders, decent folk owning their own business, employing hired servants, paying their own scores, and obliged to ask no man's leave if they chose to lay aside their work for a season to go a-proselyting. It is of record that the Emperor Domitian, having accepted the Davidic descent for the family of Nazareth, sent for what remained of them, fearful lest they set up a belated claim of royalty. There were brought to him two grandsons of Juda, the brother of Jesus, who showed him the callouses of their hands, and confessed to owning about forty acres of land from which they made their living and the taxes. Does the possession of that forty acres in any way account for the freedom with which the brother of Juda drew upon the sowing and the reaping, the wine-press and the orchard, for the figure of the Kingdom? He drew, in fact, far less on his own trade and his father's. Too much has been made of his being a carpenter—every good Jew taught his son a trade. Paul was a tent-maker, and *he* stood before kings and was versed in pagan philosophies.

Nor was there anything in the conditions in Galilee at the time from which to draw the pathetic figure of poverty. Galilee of the Gentiles was a great hostelry; trade flourished, olive-orchards thronged the slopes, vines crowded in the valleys. Here the Semitic strain had received a free admixture of Greek and Phœnician; the speech was fluent, idiomatic. Moreover, it was a time of great leisure—every seventh day was an idle day, every seventh year a Sabbath. They read freely in such books as they had, their sacred histories, the law

and the prophets, and speculated freely. Like all thinking peoples, they became turbulent. Recently Judas the Gaulonite headed an attempt of amazing courage but little discretion, to break the Roman power, holding the payment of tribute little less than slavery. Two thousand of Herod's soldiers revolted. It was a time not so much of lack, but of enormous social and economic disequilibrium. In short, a time very much like our own. Across the active material life of its three million population the beauty of the land struck like an inspiration. Hot harvesters lifted their foreheads to the wind that poured down from Hermon; on the lake sails glittered.

It was a fat land, but rebellious; humming with Zelots, Baptists, Essenes—a people jeoparding their life unto death. All in all an excellent field for hope to flourish in, such a hope as the Man from Nazareth carried back from the Rift of Jordan of a reconstructed social order in which imposition should wither and servitude be replaced by service. A fat land and well watered—but the taxes, the taxes! It is not prolonged underfeeding that makes revolutionists, but enforced compliance in the overfeeding of others. And here now was this new war of Herod's with its levies and impositions!

In the midst of all this Jesus went about quietly fishing for men. He found Peter, and Andrew his brother, and the sons of Zebedee, owners of fishing-smacks on Geneseret. One thinks of him going about, tall and personable—a figure at least of which none ever complained of any lack—free striding, and a Jew, mind you, a high-nosed Jew with an eye at once piercing and veiled, long-haired and bearded. The hair and the beard have become so fixed in tradition that, whether or no, we must accept them. No doubt it was one of the first pieces of personal information that began to be circulated about him; and then, too, they go with the temperament. One could have found him oftenest about the waterfront when the fishing-fleet came in, clad in a long undergarment of linen, and over it a woolen mantle, brown and white or blue girded with leather, and always with the turban. When he stood up in the synagogue of a Sabbath to expound the Scriptures, the linen garment girded about the breast, the mantle would be all white with a fringe upon it, and the long ends of the turban floated over the hair and the mantle. In some such guise he went about Capernaum and the neighboring villages, sowing the word and waiting. And at last the thing that he waited for happened.

Herod, vexed at his failure to scatter the armies of Aretas, and no doubt egged on by Herodias, who must have been in a fury to have her name bruited about at the cross-roads as an adulteress, had taken John and shut him up in prison. He shut him up in that stark fortress which has the Dead Sea on the west and the dead sand and black rock of Macheria on all other sides of it, but in the face of John's popularity he lacked hardihood to make any other end of the matter.

There had been doubts and disaffections in Herod the Great's time because of his being no true Hebrew, but an Idumean. Herod

characteristically has been reported as burning up the books of genealogy in the temple, proving himself a Jew by putting it beyond the possibility of anybody's disproving it. But this double fear and vexation of Herod Antipas is the true mark of Israel. John as a stirrer up of the people must be treated as a nuisance; as a prophet he was to be venerated. Herod accomplished both by putting him in jail and afterward giving his disciples access to him. So for a time the voice of the Wilderness was stilled, but no sooner had the news of John's imprisonment penetrated to the rich lake region of lower Galilee than it rose again in new accents. It was the voice of Jesus beginning to preach openly and, saying, "Repent: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

The rise of any great man in a community is always an astonishment. His essential processes are secret or obscured by ebullitions which present themselves as offenses in the general eye. And the general eye and ear are so completely filled with their own affairs that what finally disconcerts them and claims anew their attention is the least essential part of the message which the great have to deliver. The interest of the crowd, like the snake, darts at the thing moving.

About the end of the latter rains, when it seemed certain that the Baptist was not to be let preach again, the young carpenter who had recently come from Nazareth stood up in the synagogue at Capernaum and began to expound the Scriptures. There had been the customary singing of psalms, the prayer beginning, "*With great love hast Thou loved us. . . . Enlighten our eyes in thy law, . . . cause our hearts to cleave to thy commandments,*" and so down to "*Blessed be the Lord Who in love chose his people Israel.*" After that the methurgeman read from the Law, reciting in Hebrew, the language in which alone the Scriptures were permitted to be written, and translating into the vernacular. There was a little light burning always in the synagogue since the captivity of Babylon—a tiny oil-fed flicker before the place where the Law was kept. It was a symbol, that little flame, of the little light that was still in Israel, feebly burning in the midst of a decadent formalism.

The light burned, the reader closed the roll of the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogues in the chief seats facing the congregation looked down their beards at their hands folded upon their knees; the women stirred faintly in the jalousied galleries; and the carpenter rose and sat in the seat of the reader. There was nothing out of the ordinary in this. Whosoever felt the Spirit of the Lord upon him was privileged to speak in the synagogue, but it was a privilege taken seriously. Perhaps nothing would have come of this particular preaching had there not been present a man afflicted with one of those forms of mental disorder which were ranked as possession by an unclean spirit. Roused by the unfamiliar figure, by something impressive and pertinent in the preacher's manner, the spirit cried out

at him. Did it really cry, "I know thee who thou art, . . . Thou Holy One of Israel!" guessing in some dim way, as the afflicted do, the man's power and destiny, or was it merely a disordered outbreak recognizing the speaker as one seen too often with Zelots and Baptists, fomenters of social discontent? "*I know you, Jesus of Nazareth. Let us alone!*" The old cry of the social unawakened. "What have we to do with thee? Thou art come to upset conditions and invite Rome to destroy us." Certainly the words would bear that interpretation—so they sounded yesterday around a soap-box on the street corner. And there were men in that congregation who could remember, in the outbreak of Judas the Gaulonite, the punishment Rome meted to revolutionists. What fixed their attention on this occasion was that Jesus rebuked the interruption as the cry of uncleanness and commanded the evil spirit out of the afflicted. They began to wonder what doctrine this could be, and to observe among themselves that he taught not as the scribes, but as one having authority.

It appears that immediately following the synagogue service Jesus went home with Simon Peter to dinner and found Peter's wife's mother sick of a fever. Possibly she had had a draught from a practising physician, compounded of three black spiders collected from a tomb and an Egyptian herb or two, but it is much more likely that some neighbor had practised for her the Talmudic remedy of an iron knife tied by a braid of the sufferer's hair to a thorn-bush while reciting the first five verses of the third chapter of Exodus. Now comes the carpenter, taking her by the hand, lifting her up, and immediately the fever left her.

In order to understand how the news of such healing would spread with almost frenzied hope to the afflicted, one must pause a moment over the pitiful inefficiency of the healing art of that period. For in that day the practice of medicine had been corrupted from the primitive knowledge of cleanliness and simples to a mass of superstition. The cause of all sickness was a mystery, and it was believable that cures could be equally mysterious. The poor were particularly in evil case. For failing eyes there was no relief; for deformities no appliances; for anguish no boon of anesthetics, only neglect and avoidance and the unendurable pest of flies. Associated with all manner of magic-pocus, mental healing was still more reliable than the pharmacopœia of the time. Between touching the robe of a prophet and a dose of mummy powder as a specific of internal disorders, the chances of recovery were immeasurably in favor of the prophet.

As this is the first record of healing, it is probable that the exercise of it had come upon Jesus as a mere incident in the rush of spiritual certainty which had launched him upon his ministry. Filled with the power of his revelation, he had overflowed with it in the direction of the immediate human impulse, and was as little prepared as any one for what followed. That evening, as soon as the sun was set and the Sabbath inhibition taken away, from every house in the

neighborhood sick were brought forth and laid in the narrow street about Simon Peter's door. Here, as afterward, the Man from Nazareth yielded to the appeal of human misery, but he was more than troubled by it.

No doubt he saw himself—as from this time we must think of him—as having raised the cry of universal deliverance, only to hear it drowned in the wails of immediate material anguish. As soon as it was light, without disturbing the household, he slipped away out of town; he traversed the crescent plain of Geneseret between the stone walls and the hedges of prickly-pear, and sought the treeless foot-hill ridges. It was spring of the year, and thick dew, called the blessing of Hermon, lay on everything. Palms at Tiberias showed darkly against the polished lake, the olive-orchards turned the silvered under sides of leaves. White-fire broke out along the orchard row, anemones, scarlet in the crevices, larkspurs, blue-eyed veronica, and the hillside grass all swimming with the silken sails of poppies. Binding all the fields together, collecting golden drift in unplanted spaces, ran the wild mustard, and the birds of the air lodged in its branches.

Past it all he went to the windy ridges from whence one had the sea and the white slope of Hermon and the Jordan roaring to the deepest rift in the world far below him. Here he prayed, and here, when the day was somewhat advanced, Peter found him with the word that all men sought him. But when all was said Jesus would not go back into Capernaum.

"Let us go into the next town, that I may preach there," he insisted. "For this purpose came I forth." Perhaps he still hoped to avoid the swift congregation of the miserable which clogged about his knees from thenceforth wherever he moved; he was all bent upon his message. It was in this fashion, accompanied by Peter and those that were with him, that he began to go about throughout the cities of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues—John being in prison, Herod in jeopardy with Aretas, Nero in the seat of Rome, and the destruction of Jerusalem some forty years distant.

[TO BE CONTINUED]